

# ***Iowa Outdoors***

## **Iowa Department of Natural Resources**

### **www.iowadnr.com**

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## **LATE SEASON PHEASANT HUNTERS FINDING PLENTY OF BIRDS**

By Lowell Washburn  
Iowa Department of Natural Resources

GARNER -- If you're not still out chasing pheasants this winter, you're missing the boat. This year, it doesn't seem to matter that we're reaching the final days of the season. Hunters are still finding enough roosters to provide red-hot action.

The hunting continues to be so good, in fact, that ring-neck enthusiasts from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and elsewhere are still burning up the highways in an attempt to squeeze in just one more hunt before the Iowa season concludes Jan. 10. Many of those hunters are saying that the 2003 season will easily rank as one of their best ever. Last weekend, for example, one group of hunters who regularly travel here from Owatonna, Minn., reported that (with the exception of one day) their entire group has limited on roosters on every single visit to Iowa this year.

On Thursday, I talked briefly with another out-of-state hunter, Brent Rupiper of Richfield, Minn. In spite of frigid temps and blustery winds, the Minnesotan had spent the last two days tromping the northern Iowa grasslands. The effort paid off. When I saw him, Rupiper had just bagged his sixth Hancock county rooster.

So far, Rupiper has made four trips to Iowa this season. He has shot his three-bird limit of pheasants for each day of hunting. His best outing occurred on opening weekend when he and eight companions bagged 54 roosters by Sunday noon.

“I’ve been coming down to hunt Iowa pheasants for 22 years,” says Rupiper. “This has been a fantastic season, and is already my best year ever.”

DNR upland game biologist, Todd Bogenschutz isn’t surprised by Rupiper’s glowing report.

“I’ve been hearing great things all season, especially from the north-central and northwest regions of the state,” said Bogenschutz.

“Northwest, north-central, and central Iowa were the hot areas during our summer roadside surveys. As the season continues, those regions seem to be meeting our expectations,” he said. “For awhile, we seemed to go into the usual late season slump, and then it snowed. Almost immediately, I started hearing about 20-minute limits and spectacular bird numbers. The snow changed everything.”

Ken Lonnemann, DNR conservation officer for Hancock County, agrees.

“Right now, I’d have to say that the pheasant hunting is only getting better with our current weather conditions,” said Lonnemann. “We have some snow cover, and the birds are really becoming visible. Given the right circumstances, hunting parties are often seeing in excess of 100 pheasants per outing. I’m having people tell me that they’re doing as good, or even better, than they did during the mid-’90s.”

“There’s no doubt that this has been an incredible pheasant season,” said Steve Schutte, DNR conservation officer assigned to Cerro Gordo County.

“Everyone really seems to be pleased with the number of birds they’re finding and the overall number of hunters is really holding up. I’m having a lot of people tell me they’ve bagged over 30 roosters this season, and some hunters have shot over 50. I don’t care where you come from, that’s good pheasant hunting. It’s the sort of thing that keeps people coming back for more.”

“Based on the number of roosters I’m still seeing out there, I’d have to say that the stage is set,” said Lonnemann. “We’re going to see some very good pheasant hunting all the way to Jan. 10.”

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## **CROSS COUNTRY SKIERS HOPING FOR MORE SNOW**

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

The motions were there, but the “glide” was a little forced in the wet snow. The couple inches that had fallen the day before was a little too wet for good cross country ski action. A couple tracks marked the snow near the trailhead at Lake Macbride State Park. Another telltale double line through the snow showed near the road.

With a couple blasts of winter weather, cross country skiers are rummaging through their closets and basements for the cold weather equipment. The patchy white surface, though, is a reminder that prime skiing weather really hasn't blown through yet.

I'm not sure if hard core skiers secretly wish for a foot of the powdery stuff, or whether they just take advantage of the surroundings, while the rest of us grumble. And shovel. But they are quick to hit the trails and fields when it does come. Many of the same places that attract outdoor crowds in warm weather are great for winter recreation, too.

“We have about 10 miles of trails available to cross country skiers,” points out Macbride park ranger Gwen Prentice. “You have a variety of terrain; from steep to flat. They're available for cross country skiing, snoeshowing, hiking; a lot of activities that get people out to the park in cold weather.”

Many state and local parks have summer crowds of walkers and joggers who still utilize the area when it turns white.

“It's difficult to stay physically active during the winter,” admits Prentice, who is one of those park runners. “Cross country skiing is a good option. It gets people out, enjoying the park. There's a lot of wildlife to see.” In three or four places on the road through the park, you can stop and watch a few deer bedding down. Step off the road or trail and the distinctive “triangle” turkey tracks and dot-dash-dot-dash patterns laid down by squirrels are easy to pick out. A variety of birds are working the understory of the woods for food.

There's little argument, though, that it is one of the healthiest activities out there.

“For heart health, you would be hard pressed finding any activity better than cross country skiing,” acknowledges Kathleen Janz, professor of Health and Sports Studies at the University of Iowa. “Your heart gets stronger. A study of common activities shows cross country skiing scored one of the very top ratings for cardiovascular development. It was also second in developing muscle strength. Running, by comparison, was the top cardiovascular activity, but second to lowest in building muscle.”

Though you obviously need the basics: skis, bindings, boots and poles; there is not a lot more you have to have to get started. Outdoor stores and community recreation departments often rent equipment. If you're going to stick with it, you can move up from there. Displays in a couple outdoor stores I checked show basic packages from \$200 to \$350 or so. Used equipment will run less. Top of the line stuff will be more.

The downside of cross country skiing, is that Iowa doesn't offer a terribly lengthy season. The caked, icy white stuff out there offers a low quality surface... at best.

Besides the "heart benefits," the arm and leg coordination of flat land skiing is much better on your joints and muscles.

"It is a very low impact activity," notes Janz. "Basically, you are not pounding on the joints--primarily the knees. Another bonus is that it builds upper body strength, too."

That's important if you are trying to get in shape, stay in shape, or working with an injury.

"If you look at the biomechanics, there is much less compression on the joints," notes physical therapist John Tomberlin. Tomberlin, from Physio Therapy Associates in Cedar Rapids, says the traditional Nordic "kick and slide" is being replaced in competitive skiing by a technique that resembles ice skating. "It is a much more intense workout. Speeds are faster. It is a much better leg workout; the glutes, the quadriceps. It has totally changed racing." He wonders, too, whether the extra intensity might change the skiing related injuries, in the future.

For the typical skier, though, the prospect of world class times is safely shelved. The nearly silent world of cross country skiing — and a pretty good workout — are their own reward.

### **Burning Calories, One Glide At a Time**

How many calories do you shed, making tracks on cross country skis?

"A 150 pound person burns 645 calories in an hour," says University of Iowa Professor Kathleen Janz. "To walk quickly would burn 275. A moderate running pace burns 680. In testing elite athletes, those who cross country ski are always in the best shape."

Janz says that a big part of that fitness comes from the arm movement involved. Skiing is also an attractive workout, if your exercise time is budgeted.

"There's not a better calorie burner for that," agrees John Tomberlin, from Physio Therapy Associates. "You get peak benefits in a smaller amount of time."

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## **IOWA NAWCA P PROJECT BENEFITING MIGRATORY BIRDS** **Eagle Lake II Wetlands Complex Provides Site For Scientific Study**

By Lowell Washburn,  
Iowa Department of Natural Resources

As the result of a continuing partnership between the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, migrating birds will find new places to feed, rest, and nest in northern Iowa.

Under provisions of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, 725 acres of new wildlife habitat has been added to the state's Eagle Lake II Wetland Complex. Located in Winnebago and Hancock counties, the project will serve as an annex to the original Eagle Lake venture, which included the acquisition of 1,388 acres. The original purchase has resulted in the restoration of more than 400 acres of prairie wetland basins and around 980 acres of permanent grasslands.

According to DNR waterfowl biologist Guy Zenner, the Eagle Lake II complex is included in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan and is located entirely within the 31-county focus area of the plan's Prairie Pothole Joint Venture. The project is in one of the state's top four priority areas containing the highest concentrations of native prairie wetlands.

"The Eagle Lake Complex represents a very significant attempt to preserve and restore migratory bird habitat in Iowa," said Zenner.

"Newly restored potholes and grasslands will provide nesting and brood rearing habitat for mallards, blue-winged teal, wood ducks, pintails, and giant Canada geese. The Eagle Lake WMA has also been used as a release site for ongoing efforts to reintroduce a breeding population of free-flying trumpeter swans. The restoration of additional wetland basins on the Eagle Lake II complex will only enhance the success of the swan project. Restored basins will also benefit a wide range of nongame wildlife such as shorebirds, egrets, herons, and yellow-headed blackbirds. They will also provide homes for species like Blanding's turtles, which are currently listed in Iowa as species of concern. Of course, the grasslands will also benefit a broad spectrum of bird species including bobolinks, northern harriers, and others," added Zenner.

The Technical Committee of the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture Management Board has recently recognized the need to evaluate the "biological effectiveness" of wetland basins restored on NAWCA projects during the past decade. The Eagle Lake complex has become a site for those investigations.

"The Eagle Lake area has become an important location for continuing scientific studies that will ultimately evaluate the benefits and effectiveness of wetland restoration projects on waterfowl and other migratory bird species," said Zenner. "The Eagle Lake project area has also been the site for a Fish and Wildlife Service-funded study of mallard and nongame bird production and predation on restored wetlands. We conducted our nesting study on basins that were restored as a result of the original Eagle Lake NAWCA project. New restorations that will occur on the Eagle Lake II complex will add greatly to the scope and value of that study."

## **STATE NURSERY TREE SEEDLING APPLICATIONS NOW AVAILABLE FOR THE SPRING 2004 PLANTING SEASON**

AMES - Orders are now being accepted at the Iowa DNR State Forest Nursery in Ames for the spring 2004 planting season. To secure the number and types of trees needed, it is highly recommended that orders are placed soon.

There are more than 30 different tree and shrub species available for planting. Tree seedlings must be ordered in units of 100 with a minimum order of 500 seedlings, except for special packets, or to fill-in plantings from the previous year. The plants must be used for establishing or improving a forest, erosion control, wildlife cover or water conservation.

There are a variety of special packets available for attracting wildlife, such as packets for general wildlife (200 plants), turkey (200 plants), pheasant and quail (200 plants), and songbirds (20 plants). To order, or for more information, contact the State Forest Nursery at 1-800-865-2477 or on the web [www.iowadnr.com/forestry/](http://www.iowadnr.com/forestry/).

If you have forestry questions or need assistance designing a new tree planting, contact your District Forester. For information on conservation tree planting programs that provide technical and economic assistance to landowners visit [www.iowatreeplanting.com](http://www.iowatreeplanting.com) or contact Paul Tauke, Forestry Supervisor, at (515) 242-6898.

## **TWO PARK RANGERS GRADUATE FROM IOWA LAW ENFORCEMENT ACADEMY**

JOHNSTON -- Two park rangers from the State Parks Bureau participated in the graduation ceremony for the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy's 196<sup>th</sup> Basic Training Class, which was held Dec. 19 in Johnston. The academy is a 13-week peace officer training held at Camp Dodge.

Chad Rowson, park ranger at Lake Ahquabi State Park, was elected president of the 196<sup>th</sup> basic training class and Sara Franklin-Tharpe, park ranger at Geode State Park, was elected secretary/treasurer. In addition to holding a class office, Franklin-Tharpe received the McCartney Award, which is given in memory of R. C. McCartney, who served for 25 years as the sheriff of Floyd County. This award, perhaps the most coveted awarded, is presented to a member of each basic training class who the staff and members of the class feel is the most conscientious student.

"The bureau is extremely proud of the leadership roles they exemplified during their academy training," said Kevin Szcodronski, bureau chief of state parks. "We look forward to their continued professionalism and leadership as they return to their parks."

Previously, Rowson worked seasonally at Ledges State Park and served as a reserves officer in Boone County. Franklin-Tharpe worked seasonally at Lake Wapello State Park and served as a correctional officer at Mt. Pleasant. Both park rangers began working for the bureau April 25.

For more information, contact Kevin Szcodronski at (515) 281-8674.

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## **CORELL NAMED NEW WATER QUALITY BUREAU CHIEF**

DES MOINES — Chuck Corell has been named chief of the DNR's water quality bureau.

Corell began his DNR career in 1990 as an environmental specialist at the Spencer field office. He went on to become supervisor of the Atlantic field office and later supervisor of the air quality bureau's compliance section. Prior to working for the DNR, Corell worked with the Cass and Audubon County Conservation Boards.

"Chuck brings a wide background to this position, including experience as a field officer and his work with local groups and program development," said Wayne Gieselman, head of the DNR's environmental services. "We look forward to Chuck's leadership and experience."

**For more information, contact Kevin Baskins at (515) 281-8395.**